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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 14 TASHKENT 000270

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G, PRM, AND DRL; G/TIP FOR MEGAN HALL AND SHEREEN  
FARAJ; SCA/RA FOR JESSICA MAZZONE; INL FOR ANDREW BUHLER  
AND NORIS BALABANIAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [PREF](#) [ELAB](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: SUBMISSION FOR EIGHTH ANNUAL  
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: SECSTATE 2731

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) Post's submission for the eighth annual Trafficking  
in Persons (TIP) report begins in paragraph 4. Per reftel,  
this information covers the period from April 2007 to March  
2008. The information provided in the report has been  
gathered from numerous sources, including the Government of  
Uzbekistan (GOU), Organization for Security and Cooperation  
in Europe Project Coordination Office in Tashkent, the  
International Organization for Migration (IOM), USAID, local  
TIP-focused NGOs, and local press reports.

2. (SBU) Embassy Tashkent's TIP point of contact is:

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3. (SBU) Number of hours spent on report preparation:

P/E officer: 40 hours  
USAID: 2 hours  
PAS: 2 hours  
DCM: 1 hour

4. (SBU) Post's response is keyed to the questions provided  
in paragraphs 27-30 of reftel.

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OVERVIEW  
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1A. Uzbekistan is a source country, and to a lesser extent a transit country, for trafficking in persons. Statistical data and information on trafficking activities and trends are scant and incomplete. An International Organization for Migration (IOM) study completed in fall 2005 estimated that over half a million Uzbeks are victims of trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation annually, but the premier local NGO thinks this figure includes all annual labor migrants, not all of whom are trafficking victims. The study, which was funded by USAID, cited the absence of effective mechanisms to regulate labor migration as a key factor in exacerbating the labor trafficking problem. The study also noted that 90% of the surveyed victims of sexual exploitation hide the truth of their experience from friends and relatives. There are no comprehensive statistics available on the extent or magnitude of the problem. The available sources of information regarding TIP are: the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the National Security Service (NSS), the State Customs Committee, General Prosecutor's Office, media sources, private citizens, human rights activists, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Tashkent Project Coordination Office, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), TIP-focused NGO Istiqbolli Avlod, and various other NGOs working on TIP. After a deterioration in the diplomatic relationship accelerated following the Andijon violence in May 2005, the Uzbek Government, including law enforcement and judicial officials, was less willing to meet with U.S. Embassy officials to discuss TIP and many other issues. However, in the second half of 2007 the relationship began to steadily improve, and the Government of Uzbekistan

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was more responsive in providing data and granting requested meetings.

Men are mainly trafficked to illegal labor markets in Kazakhstan and Russia, generally in the construction, agricultural (tobacco and cotton), and service sectors. An IOM report published in May 2005 highlighted an increase in labor trafficking from Uzbekistan to southern regions of Kazakhstan. It noted that the majority of these migrants work without contracts, receiving only partial or in some cases no pay for their labor. Victims of labor trafficking typically cross the border by truck or bus to Kazakhstan. There have also been reports of men being taken by train to Russia and Ukraine. NGO and GOU sources reported that Shymkent, Kazakhstan; Moscow, Russia; Baku, Azerbaijan; Tbilisi, Georgia; and Osh, Kyrgyzstan served as transit points, often for Uzbek citizens traveling with false documents. Under Uzbek law, the only permitted form of overseas employment is through contracts arranged through the Ministry of Labor. The Ministry arranges for thousands of Uzbek citizens to work abroad. The majority of contracts are for jobs in South Korea. All other labor migration is illegal, and the Government has prosecuted individuals for working illegally abroad. Potential migrant workers must seek middlemen to facilitate employment abroad, thus opening the door to traffickers. Since 2002, Uzbekistan has occasionally restricted overland travel by its citizens to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Many individuals traveling for employment cross the border illegally.

Uzbekistan is a source country for both labor and sexual trafficking. The typical sexual trafficking victim in Uzbekistan is a young woman (age 17-30). According to NGOs, the Government, the media, and information gathered by the Embassy, most female victims of sexual exploitation were trafficked to the United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, India, Israel, Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan. Many reports of women being trafficked abroad indicate that the victims traveled by air, although NGO workers report that secondary airports and transit routes are becoming more prevalent since authorities are reportedly much tougher at the main international airport in Tashkent. Many

victims have been unwilling to become involved in legal proceedings that could result in their testimony becoming public due to both societal pressure and the fear of retaliation from their traffickers. Victims are also well aware that under Uzbek law, female smugglers convicted of first-time criminal offenses are frequently amnestied. Because many human traffickers are women, this practice further discourages victims from participating in legal proceedings. Uzbekistan Airways has an extensive route network that provides direct service from Tashkent to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Thailand, Turkey, Israel, Malaysia, India, South Korea, and numerous European destinations; however, due to strict visa regimes it is difficult for traffickers to use Tashkent as a transit point for victims from other countries. The main anti-TIP NGO is aware of only a handful of trafficking victims from other countries who transited Uzbekistan over the past several years.

According to the Government and NGOs, internal trafficking generally takes place from rural to urban areas. Internal trafficking exists in agriculture, construction, domestic servitude, and other forms of unskilled labor. Methods used include withholding of pay and/or identity documents, such as passports. In order to work legally in a particular region

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or city, a citizen must register with the local administration and obtain a permission stamp in his or her passport. Those living and working in a city without that stamp are doing so illegally and are subject to fines, jail time, and removal from the city. Traffickers threaten to inform the police of people who are working illegally. This is especially true in Tashkent city. According to IOM, sex trafficking most often originates in Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand, while labor trafficking originates mainly from Karakalpakstan, Surkhandarya and the Ferghana Valley.

The GOU has stated that labor trafficking constitutes the majority of cases and that trafficking for sexual exploitation has increased. Information provided by NGOs and media reporting suggests that both labor and sexual trafficking are increasing, particularly as economic conditions deteriorate. There is anecdotal evidence that in many villages with high unemployment most of the men have left to work abroad, leaving only the elderly, women, and children. However, there are no comprehensive data definitively showing this upward trend. One high level GOU official said that little can be done to stop trafficking since, in many cases, people can only find work abroad. This official and others have acknowledged that the stagnation of the economy is making the fight against trafficking more difficult. Nonetheless, a high-level official in the Ministry of Internal Affairs said in February 2008 that "the trafficking-in-persons issue is now on the national agenda."

1B. Often traffickers make contacts with the victims through family members. Several victims have said that their friends introduced them to recruiters. Traffickers are also known to pose as entrepreneurs and businesspeople. Agents in nightclubs or prostitution rings solicit women, some of whom are already engaged in prostitution. Victims are offered jobs and decent salaries relative to low local salaries, and victims often believe they will work in restaurants or as cleaners. Labor trafficking victims are typically moved across the border to Kazakhstan by bus or truck, or to Russia by train, whereas sexual trafficking victims are often given plane tickets and are met by their future trafficker upon arrival in the destination country. False documents are being used to move some victims, and a main NGO reports that Almaty, Kazakhstan is becoming a more common departure point by air since officials have increased scrutiny of single, female passengers flying out of Tashkent Airport. Osh, Kyrgyzstan is also a common departure point, although NGO staff said its use is decreasing.

Government officials have steadily increased cooperation with NGOs in fighting TIP during this reporting period. This is evidenced by the extensive participation of Government officials in anti-TIP training sessions in all 12 provinces, the nationwide educational campaign, and the direct cooperation of Government officials with TIP-focused NGOs. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has a special criminal investigation unit and a criminal prevention unit tasked with preventing TIP. There is a willingness to take action against Government officials linked to TIP, especially at the lower provincial level where corruption is common. Recognizing its own limited resources, the Government is willing to make use of others' resources (NGOs and international organizations) to fight TIP, and anti-TIP NGOs now enjoy a more cooperative, open relationship with the Government of Uzbekistan.

The Government inter-agency working group on TIP, formerly

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supported by the OSCE with INL funding, concluded its work upon the completion of its main task to draft comprehensive legislation, which as of February 2008 was under consideration in parliament. The National Security Service (NSS), which is particularly powerful in Uzbekistan and includes the Border Guards, conducted five inter-agency meetings to discuss TIP issues in 2007. The MVD's specialized Anti-Trafficking Unit has taken consistent measures to fight trafficking. Officials from the MVD, Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Labor are also cooperating with NGOs in an ongoing public information campaign to raise awareness.

The draft national action plan to combat TIP remains with the Presidential Apparatus, and government officials noted they expect a decree to be issued by the President in 2008 as a parallel step to the TIP-specific legislation. The Government continues to direct border guards at airports to give more scrutiny to unaccompanied young women traveling to the UAE, Turkey, South Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia; it authorizes them to deny such women permission to leave the country. Likewise, the Office of Passports and Exit Visas under the MVD has ordered its officers to scrutinize applications of young men and women traveling abroad for work.

1C. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), National Security Service (NSS), Customs Committee, Ministry of Labor, General Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, Oliy Majlis (Parliament), and National Women's Affairs Committee are all involved in anti-trafficking efforts. Mahallas (traditional neighborhood associations) and government-sponsored youth organizations also take part in prevention efforts. The MVD plays the most prominent role as the preeminent investigative body and is also responsible for issuing exit permits.

1D. Government officials addressing the issue of trafficking must cope with cultural taboos, corruption, lack of resources, and poorly developed criminal investigative techniques. However, progress has been made in overcoming cultural taboos in discussing sexual trafficking, and officials at both the local and national level now regularly address the topic publicly. Despite concerns that mass labor migration could reflect poorly on Uzbekistan's economic conditions, officials now also admit labor trafficking is a problem. Lack of funds greatly limits the Government's ability to address TIP. Even though officials have addressed the problem publicly, they lack experience and expertise on combating TIP. However, this is changing as a result of an ongoing project funded by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and implemented by the key anti-TIP NGO in Uzbekistan. More than 200 Uzbek law enforcement officials in all 12 provinces received training in 2007, and NGOs have already noticed increased knowledge about the issue among rank-and-file

officers and greater sensitivity towards victims. The MVD reports that, nationwide, it has 118 officers working specifically on TIP. These are in turn supported by an additional 154 regular police officers working on the issue, for a total of 272 dedicated officers. However, overall corruption is believed to be a problem. The MVD and the Prosecutor's Office have both received U.S. Government training in criminal investigative techniques, including the handling of crime witnesses and victims.

The Government has made an effort to increase the level of

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support for prevention and education programs. Government officials have been working closely with TIP-focused NGOs supported by IOM, USAID, and the State Department, s INL Bureau to establish prevention programs. The Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has continued to develop an assistance and repatriation program designed to make it easier for Uzbek trafficking victims abroad to return. In some cases the time frame for identifying victims and issuing certificates of return has been reduced from six months to two weeks, thereby eliminating long, unnecessary detentions; often this has been the result of close cooperation with a local NGO. A main NGO reported that the police, MFA, Consular Department, border guards, and overseas diplomatic missions began notifying it of women returning from abroad who appeared as if they might be victims of trafficking. The NGO noted that increased cooperation with the government over the past year has made it easier to operate more effectively. The NGO is regularly allowed to assist groups of women returning from abroad at the airport and help them through entry processing. In Karakalpakstan, the MVD has distributed brochures warning of the dangers of trafficking and provided other travel-related information to all first-time passport recipients. The brochures are available in Russian, Uzbek and Karakalpak.

1E. (SBU) The GOU regularly monitors anti-trafficking efforts conducted by relevant ministries. MVD, prosecutors, and MFA officials speak publicly about trafficking during speeches, news releases, and news conferences. Often the speeches take place during training sessions on combating TIP. IOM started anti-trafficking operations in Tashkent in 2003 through an affiliated local NGO. IOM's local NGO partners operate ten TIP-focused hotlines throughout Uzbekistan, which received over 17,806 calls in 2007, which is an eight percent increase over 2006.

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INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS  
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1A. The law prohibits all crimes associated with trafficking, including trafficking of minors, and provides for penalties of five to eight years imprisonment for trafficking-related crimes. At present the Uzbek Criminal Procedure Code addresses several trafficking-related offenses. The most common charge is Article 135 (The Recruitment of People for Exploitation). The Government reported that additional offenses that have been or can be used in TIP prosecutions included Article 137 (Kidnapping); Article 138 (Forced Illegal Imprisonment); Article 209 (Official Forgery); Article 210 (Reception of Bribe) and Article 211 (Giving of a Bribe). Recruitment for trafficking is punishable by 6 months to 3 years' imprisonment and fines of up to approximately 1,900,000 soum (approximately \$1,520). The recruitment charge could be levied against international or domestic traffickers. All law enforcement agencies are charged with upholding the anti-trafficking provisions of the criminal code. The current laws are not adequate to cover the full scope of TIP, and long-promised specific anti-trafficking legislation was finally forwarded from the Presidential Apparatus to the lower house of the parliament in January 2008. On February 21, 2008 the lower house approved the "first reading" of the draft law, meaning the



legislative body agreed in principle to the TIP legislation. The next step is for the detailed provisions of the draft to be examined and possibly modified before a subsequent vote at an upcoming plenary session of the parliament.

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1B. Trafficking-related crimes come with penalties of between five to eight years in prison. However, under proposed amendments to the criminal code submitted to the parliament in January 2008, sentences would increase to 10 to 15 years. MVD officials have said that these proposed amendments are critical to ensuring that convicted traffickers are not amnestied. Typically, amnesties are extended to those convicted of crimes carrying prison terms of less than ten years. Under the proposed amendments, therefore, fewer traffickers will be amnestied. MVD officials have expressed frustration at convicting traffickers and then seeing them amnestied. Another reason that traffickers receive amnesties is because many of them are women, who are much more likely to receive an amnesty for their first offense, in accordance with Uzbek cultural beliefs. Numerous press clippings during the reporting period show that offenders are indeed being punished with sentences of 5-8 years in prison.

1C. There are no specific penalties for labor trafficking offenses. However, recruiters using deceptive recruitment practices are often prosecuted under other sections of the criminal code dealing with trafficking-related crimes. Uzbekistan is a major source country, and stories of deceptive labor recruiters promising poor Uzbeks lucrative jobs overseas appear frequently in press articles.

1D. According to Department of Justice officials, penalties for sexual assault in Uzbekistan range from three to seven years imprisonment, which is less than the sentences typically meted out for trafficking offenders. Sexual assault of a person under 14 years of age is punishable by 15 to 20 years in prison. Sexual assault by multiple persons carries up to 15 years.

1E. According to the Uzbek Criminal Code, prostitution per se is not criminalized. However, owning and operating brothels, as well as pimping, are criminalized. Illegal brothels do operate in Uzbekistan, but not openly.

1F. In contrast from previous years, the Government made significant efforts to provide detailed trafficking prosecution statistics for 2007,. Data was provided via official diplomatic correspondence from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tashkent, the Uzbekistan Embassy in Washington, DC, and in person from the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. According to the Government, 273 trafficking cases (involving 303 suspects) were investigated in 2007. The suspects included 161 males and 142 females; this is the first time a gender breakdown of trafficking offenders was available, and counters previous anecdotal evidence that traffickers are predominantly women. Courts subsequently considered 139 cases (involving 185 suspects), which in Uzbekistan almost certainly results in a guilty verdict.

Many convicted traffickers do not serve complete sentences; they are amnestied. Amnesties are common for those with prison terms of less than ten years, especially for women in accordance with strong Uzbek cultural beliefs. Since the present trafficking-related sentences range from 5-8 years and many convicted traffickers are women, convicted traffickers are often eligible to receive amnesties. However, Department of Justice officials stress that this is not automatic and is only possible for first-time offenders. Officials claim that, in the past five years since they

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tracked the data, there have been no known recidivists. The government provided data on amnesties which indicates 28 cases (involving 53 traffickers) were given amnesty in 2007, including 10 who admitted guilt in the preliminary investigation phase, 26 who acknowledged wrongdoing before the court, two who were amnestied and released from jail, and 15 who were amnestied and had jail sentences reduced. However, there were far fewer amnesties than court cases, which illustrates that, in contrast to previous years, more offenders are serving time in prison for trafficking-in-persons crimes. The government reports that, as of January 31, 2008, there are 66 trafficking offenders incarcerated for violations of Article #135 of the Criminal Code (recruiting people for exploitation). Officials were not able to confirm a breakdown showing whether cases were for sexual or labor exploitation. Sometimes amnesties are granted immediately and others are granted on a large-scale in conjunction with important national holidays or milestones, so it is difficult to determine how much of the sentence is served before an amnesty is applied.

Previously provided data showed 148 people were convicted for TIP-crimes in 2005, which according to the General Prosecutor's Office represented a significant increase over the three previous years combined (147 total), reflecting the emergence of the trafficking-in-persons issue on the law enforcement agenda. In 2005 the MVD registered 250 crimes under Article 135, adding that 268 people were detained on the basis of these crimes, and that 675 people were recognized as victims. In 2005 the GOU stated that TIP activity related to sexual exploitation was growing, as evidenced by the fact that 196 of the total number of victims that year were sexually exploited.

¶G. The government typically lacks resources and skills to provide extensive training; however in February 2008 the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs emphasized that more training has recently been added to the curriculum for young officers at the training academy and additional courses are being developed in response to this recent challenge. The MVD expressed its appreciation for ongoing training programs provided by the United States (through the State Department,s INL Bureau and the Embassy,s Democracy Commission Grants) and NGOs (especially the IOM-affiliated group Istiqbolli Avlod, which is implementing a two-year INL program). In 2007, Istiqbolli Avlod conducted 10 training events for law enforcement officials throughout Uzbekistan involving more than 200 officers from MVD Units for Fighting Crimes Related to Recruitment of Persons for the Purpose of Exploitation, Units for Entry-Exit and Citizenship, and Crime Prevention Units. The General Prosecutor,s Office publicly cited these training sessions as contributing to a 35% increase in the government,s ability to detect trafficking crimes from complaints. The network of trafficking NGOs consistently reported increased awareness among law enforcement personnel to the problem and greater sensitivity towards victims as a result of these training sessions.

In addition,,various embassies and international organizations have also provided training on counter-TIP to Uzbek law enforcement officials. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) launched a new anti-TIP program in March 2008 that includes training for law enforcement officers and the OSCE has also proposed a counter-TIP project for 2008 that also includes funding support from the State Department,s INL Bureau.

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¶H. The Government has cooperative relationships and agreements with several countries and is party to the Minsk Convention. The Government works very closely with Interpol Tashkent on combating TIP. The GOU readily acknowledges that it needs more cooperative relationships and agreements with countries of destination in order to more effectively

prosecute trafficking. MVD officers have expressed strong interest in strengthening their relations with counterparts in Russia, Kazakhstan, and the UAE. In the next phase of an ongoing INL-funded program, IOM plans to organize meetings to help build these connections in 2008.

I. There are no known requests for extradition of accused traffickers. The Government has extradition agreements with several countries. The Government may extradite its citizens to another country if there is a bilateral extradition treaty in place.

J. The Government is not tolerant of trafficking. NGOs have obtained anecdotal information regarding low level, local corruption usually involving forged or fake travel documents or marriage certificates.

K. There is no evidence of direct Government involvement in trafficking. However, some Government employees may have accepted bribes from traffickers to facilitate their operations. According to unconfirmed information from NGOs, local officials have falsified or sold travel documents in the past. These allegations usually involve the issuance of exit visas. In February 2008 a full-page article appeared in a prominent state-controlled newspaper describing a trafficking-in-persons case. In a frank admission of local-level corruption, the article noted that a trafficking conspirator quickly obtained travel documents and permits for a female victim that could only have been possible with the help of "connections." The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs said that local level passport officials have been given specific instructions to carefully analyze suspicious travel plans, especially among first-time applicants. There is scant information from NGOs alleging that, at the local level, individual police officers have received bribes from traffickers. In April 2007 the local press reported that a Lieutenant Colonel working as an investigator at the Ministry of Internal Affairs branch at Tashkent Airport was sentenced to ten years in prison for demanding a USD 500 bribe from a repatriated victim of trafficking.

L. Uzbekistan does not contribute troops to international peace-keeping efforts.

M. Uzbekistan does not have an identified child sex tourism problem. It is difficult for individual tourist visitors to obtain tourist visas and, if they do and visit Uzbekistan, there are onerous registration requirements once in the country. Flights to Uzbekistan are also expensive and sporadic, and a strong cultural emphasis on family honor make it an unlikely child sex tourism destination.

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PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS  
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A. Uzbekistan is mainly a source country for trafficking and NGOs have reported almost no foreign trafficking victims who ended up in Uzbekistan. A strict visa regime, even for transit passengers, and inconvenient, expensive flight networks also make Uzbekistan an impractical transit point.

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B. The Government has provided only limited direct support to trafficking victims within Uzbekistan. Government data indicates that in 2007 the National Security Service (NSS) provided assistance to 40 trafficking victims who participated in investigations; their testimonies led to 23 convictions. The Government lacks funding for sustained support to individual victims. There are two shelters in Uzbekistan that support trafficking victims, one in the capital Tashkent and one in Bukhara. Both are currently funded by USAID and operated by IOM through the local NGO Istiqbolli Avlod. The Government previously told the Embassy that it is interested in investigating the possibility of



supporting Tashkent's shelter for victims of trafficking, but this has not materialized. The Foreign Ministry assists victims in returning to Uzbekistan from abroad by providing passports or travel documents at no cost to stranded victims.

Airport police contact a women's NGO in Tashkent when they identify suspected trafficking victims or in cases of the return of known female deportees from abroad. The Tashkent shelter has housed 286 victims since it opened in 2004 and also offers legal, psychological, medical, and career development assistance. The Tashkent shelter assisted 88 victims in 2007 alone. The Bukhara shelter has served 59 victims since opening during 2006, including 34 in 2007. NGOs describe an urgent need for additional victim shelters in the remote northwest Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as in the Ferghana Valley.

1C. The Government lacks funding for widespread support for victims, although officials said that provincial governors have been tasked to provide employment opportunities for returned traffickers. It is unlikely that such efforts are extensive thus far, but this is a prelude to formal requirements that are included in the draft national action plan, which officials expect to be implemented as a Presidential decree concurrent with the passage of the draft legislation. There was no funding support provided to international NGOs, although the government has supported awareness campaigns conducted by local NGOs and neighborhood-level groups.

1D. The NGO Istiqbolli Avlod ("Future Generation"), as well as IOM, are in regular contact with Consular and airport officials regarding returning TIP victims. As a result of improved government cooperation and sensitivity, their staffs are regularly allowed into restricted areas to greet and assist returning victims. Since the opening of the Tashkent victims' shelter in December 2004, IOM has provided victims with more long-term assistance. IOM and Istiqbolli Avlod reported assisting 477 trafficking victims in 2007 who returned to Uzbekistan. IOM officials are also in regular contact with Uzbek consular officials in the UAE, Thailand, Turkey, Malaysia and China. NGOs have reported improved cooperation from the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its consular missions abroad in providing timely documents. A series of USAID-funded hotlines received 17,806 calls in 2007, an eight percent increase from 2006.

1E. While there are no official laws outlawing prostitution per se, Uzbek law prohibits brothels and pimping. Illegal brothel operations are small and localized, and there is no known problem of foreign sex workers working in Uzbekistan. Visa requirements are very strict to enter the country and, once here, there are stringent internal registration and monitoring requirements that affect all foreigners.

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1F. Trafficking victims are not jailed or prosecuted upon their return to Uzbekistan. Upon arrival, victims are typically allowed a few days to rest before filing police reports. However, victims are requested to sign documentation in instances when they departed the country illegally, but they are immediately amnestied and not charged with this crime. The Prosecutor's Office and the MVD have reported that they recognize the importance of not treating victims as criminals, and one high-level official noted that "it would just make a bad situation worse." Various training sessions, which emphasize the victim-based approach, have also allowed investigation-level officers to see the value of the victim's testimony.

1G. The Government has increasingly encouraged victims to give statements and assist with investigations. MVD officials have made clear that voluntary cooperation of victims is critical to building trafficking cases. Victims may seek civil redress, file civil suits, and/or seek legal action against traffickers. There are no formal programs in

place to effectively protect victims who might be material witnesses. There is no victim restitution program. NGOs reported that, as a result of training programs, investigating officers are more sensitive to victims compared to previous years, when the prevailing attitude was that they "got what they deserved." Furthermore, authorities have started to permit attorneys who work with the NGOs to sit in on depositions, which substantially increases victims' comfort level in participating in investigations and reminds officers to be considerate. Nonetheless, during a recent visit to the trafficking shelter in Tashkent, an NGO official noted that a majority of the victims present were too ashamed, emotional, or frightened to cooperate with police requests to assist in investigations.

1H. The Government provides minimal protection to victims or witnesses. Government officials have visited one NGO's office and provided guidance to returned victims about answering the phone and questions from strangers. An MVD officer has also provided victims with his cellular phone number to call in case of an emergency. Most long-term victim support is provided by the USAID-funded shelters in Tashkent and Bukhara.

1I. According to the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, the Government has tried to improve training to recognize trafficking victims, especially to young officers studying in the training academy. The chief of the MVD's anti-TIP unit added that they are still responding to the recent challenges posed by this "young crime." The Government regularly provided in-kind contributions for training, such as venues and transportation for NGO representatives. IOM officials speak with Uzbek Consuls abroad at least once a week.

1J. The Government provides little financial assistance to repatriated nationals who are victims of trafficking. The government does, however, assist victims in returning to Uzbekistan. According to Uzbek law, girls under the age of 18 qualify for assistance during repatriation, but the sums are small.

1K. NGOs working with trafficking victims include IOM, which operates through its local affiliated NGO Istiqbolli Avlod. This NGO in turn has a network of 10 regional NGOs around the country. According to July 2007 data, IOM provided airfare to return 477 victims to Uzbekistan from various countries and had registered 659 trafficking cases involving Uzbek

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victims. With USAID support, IOM provides two shelters for victims staffed by a full-time doctor and psychologist and part-time trainers to assist them in their repatriation. The Tashkent shelter has assisted 286 victims since opening in 2004, and the Bukhara shelter has assisted 59 victims since its 2006 opening. The Embassy Democracy Commission also supported three counter-TIP projects through local partners, including a women's NGO which organized a series of vocational trainings and to prevent trafficking; a group of young journalists who designed an Uzbek language website that regularly posts articles on human trafficking, exploitation of children, and unemployment; and an NGO which provides free legal consultations to labor migrants and advice on how to prevent themselves from becoming TIP victims. Cooperation between certain local NGOs and the local authorities remains strong; IOM and other TIP-focused NGOs are in close, regular contact with GOU officials, meeting returning victims at the airport and assisting them with their readjustment.

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PREVENTION  
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1A. The GOU continued to repeatedly acknowledge in public forums that, as a recent global challenge, TIP exists and is a problem in Uzbekistan. It has done this during press conferences, as well as at anti-TIP training seminars and

conferences. The Government has emphasized that TIP problems are just as serious as in surrounding countries that fared better on previous versions of the TIP report, especially Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia. The Government believes that the focus should also be on transit and destination countries, and that more effective multilateral mechanisms are needed for combating trafficking.

11B. In 2007 there was an increase in newspaper articles, television programs, and radio shows discussing trafficking in persons. According to government-provided data, there were 360 counter-TIP articles printed in newspapers and magazines; close monitoring of daily press clips confirmed that more attention has been devoted to the topic, including a front-page article when an embassy officer met with the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs to update this report. The government also reported that MVD officers participated in 184 radio speeches to raise awareness about TIP in 2007 and that 793 television segments were aired throughout the country. Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives attended an embassy-sponsored screening of an American TIP-themed film in the summer of 2007 and expressed interest in broadcasting it on Uzbek national television (however, the Department reported that the U.S. network would not grant copyright permission). However, the Embassy received permission to distribute copies of the film to NGOs throughout the country, which are using it in local in-house awareness-raising efforts. The National Security Service (NSS) also produced videos describing how TIP criminal groups operate, which were broadcast on state-run media.

The state radio also continued airing awareness campaigns that are sponsored jointly by the MVD and IOM, particularly in the regions. Regional television stations worked with NGOs to air informational public service announcements (PSAs) regarding the dangers of TIP and to advertise ten regional TIP hotlines run by the NGOs. An NGO in Surkhandarya received an Embassy Democracy Commission grant to conduct radio PSAs raising awareness about trafficking. A group in Tashkent also received Democracy Commission funds to

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establish a website that often includes articles on human trafficking and exploitation. A different NGO outside of Tashkent used Democracy Commission funds to support free legal consultations to labor migrants and provided advice about how to avoid becoming a victim of human trafficking. The Government likewise cooperated with NGOs and allowed them to place posters warning about the dangers of TIP on public buses, passport offices, in subway cars, and consular sections abroad. USAID provided funding support for these public informational campaigns. The Government has likewise paid to translate these posters into the Karakalpak language and distribute them for those living in the westernmost region of Uzbekistan. The Government permitted NGOs to advertise ten regional TIP hotlines on local television stations. As a result of these awareness campaigns, IOM's ten USAID-funded hotlines received a total of 17,806 calls during 2007, representing an eight percent increase over 12006. The majority of these calls were inquiries about employment abroad, and IOM sources said that about 10% of callers specified trafficking in their calls. The GOU also jointly runs awareness programs in schools and colleges. Many schools have cooperated with a local NGO to hold summer camps on raising awareness of trafficking.

The GOU formed "coordinating units" in Nukus, Termez, Jizzak, Navoi, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Syrdarya Provinces, and a joint unit for Namangan and Andijon Provinces. These units combine the efforts of NGOs and the government and include representatives from the MVD, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, Prosecutor's Office, and local NGOs. Religious leaders in Jizzak Province have also been trained to speak out against trafficking in persons. Imams have mentioned the dangers of trafficking during Friday prayers.

1C. The relationship between GOU officials, NGOs, and other civil society elements improved substantially in 2007. Istiqbolli Avlod attributed a better working relationship to its strong, sustained efforts to make inroads with the government, and the INL-funded trainings have helped build mutual trust and a working relationship. As the government has increasingly admitted the prevalence of the TIP problem in Uzbekistan, it has encouraged NGOs to do more and relied on them to provide support services to victims that are not offered by the government. The government, which has been suspicious of international NGOs with foreign funding streams, seems to have accepted the positive role anti-TIP NGOs play.

1D. Uzbekistan carefully monitors the whereabouts of its citizens within the country, but it does not have extensive records of actual outmigration. However, all citizens wishing to depart the country (with the exception of some CIS countries, including Kazakhstan) must obtain an exit permit stamp in their passports. MVD officials note that next-generation passport technology will improve its capacity to track migration data. Uzbekistan will start rolling out new biometric passports in 2008 and intends to complete the project by 2011, when a majority of old passports are scheduled to expire. There are resources budgeted to provide the necessary data collection equipment to all border posts as part of a multi-year project. Border guards have been instructed to screen for trafficking victims at key exit points. Authorities have reportedly been very successful at Tashkent Airport, but the large number of northbound migrants crossing the land borders with Kazakhstan make it difficult for authorities to identify potential trafficking victims.

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1E. Inter-agency cooperation on TIP issues appears to be limited. A previous inter-agency working group developed draft legislation that is currently in the parliament but disbanded once the draft was completed. The MVD is mainly responsible for anti-TIP activities within the country, and it does have a special unit which coordinates the Ministry's activities throughout the country. On a multilateral basis a Central Asia Regional Information Center (CARICC) was established in late 2007 which, despite its counter-narcotics focus, is expected to facilitate anti-TIP cooperation between law enforcement agencies in the region. There is no public corruption task force in Uzbekistan.

1F. The Government has developed a draft national action plan on TIP, which it plans to implement as a Presidential decree concurrent with the expected passage of its new anti-TIP legislation. The MVD, NSS, MFA, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Health, Supreme Court, Ministry of Education, General Prosecutor's Office, and NGOs were involved in its development. However the draft is under review at the Presidential Apparatus, and has not been finalized or signed. Amendments which would strengthen Article 135 of the Criminal Code (The Recruitment of People for Exploitation) were submitted to the Presidential Apparatus in summer 2005 and finally forwarded to the parliament in early 2008.

1G. The Government of Uzbekistan has made substantial efforts during the reporting period to implement its own awareness campaign by dedicating time on state-controlled media to anti-trafficking public announcements featuring law enforcement officials. According to government data there were 184 radio broadcasts and 793 television spots throughout the country. The target audience is generally potential sex trafficking victims. The government also supports awareness efforts conducted by NGOs by permitting the use of space in public places and transportation for awareness-raising brochures and posters, many of which include information about the USAID-supported network of hotlines. Uzbekistan is a source country, and those who form the demand for Uzbek victims of forced labor are located abroad.

H. Not applicable

I. Not applicable

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TIP Heroes  
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A. Post is pleased to nominate Ms. Liliya Khamzaeva as an anti-trafficking hero for inclusion in the 2008 report. Ms. Khamzaeva has worked as the Program Assistant at the Uzbek NGO Istiqbolli Avlod for more than four years and has been instrumental in raising the profile of the trafficking in persons issue in Uzbekistan. Ms. Khamzaeva, who speaks fluent English, has worked tirelessly to liaise with international organizations and prepare documentation for Uzbek trafficking victims to return from abroad. Istiqbolli Avlod, in partnership with IOM, helps victims to return from abroad, provides shelter and support services, and conducts awareness campaigns for the general public and government officials. Ms. Khamzaeva contributed to a successful INL-funded project that trained 200 law enforcement officers on human trafficking in 10 sessions around the country in 2007, which high-ranking government officials already acknowledged had an immediate impact on

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field-level law enforcement effectiveness in the struggle against trafficking. She traveled to the United States last year as part of an International Visitors Program which focused on anti-trafficking, and she has applied her experience abroad to develop new strategies and proposals which will diversify the NGO's activities. Ms. Khamzaeva is highly dedicated to her work and is a valuable resource in a country that has only recently begun to grasp the seriousness of the human trafficking problem.

B. Post is also pleased to nominate Ms. Muratova Makokhat, a lawyer working at the local anti-trafficking NGO Istiqbolli Avlod. For five years she has represented the interests of repatriated victims testifying in Uzbek courts, which can be an intimidating experience. Ms. Makokhat also regularly meets returning victims at the Tashkent Airport and at the land border with Kazakshtan, where she facilitates their entry and escorts them to the shelter services. She has personally visited immigration prisons in the UAE twice, where she has assisted in efforts to identify and interview victims and help prepare and expedite repatriation documents on their behalf. Ms. Makokhat has also traveled to Kazakhstan upon the request of victims, family members to work directly with Kazakh law enforcement officials to secure the release and return of trafficking victims. She is also involved in training Uzbek law enforcement officers as part of an ongoing INL-funded program, which has already been credited with raising awareness about the problem and increasing sensitivity towards victims. We salute Ms. Makokhat's efforts and are honored to nominate her as a hero for this year's Trafficking in Persons Report.

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Best Practices  
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The Uzbek NGO Istiqbolli Avlod has been at the forefront of efforts to address the trafficking in persons problem in Uzbekistan. The number one destination for female victims of sexual exploitation is the United Arab Emirates (UAE); many victims violate visa and immigration requirements and end up incarcerated and too afraid to even acknowledge their nationality. Officials from Istiqbolli Avlod began making multiple trips to the UAE each year to build connections with local authorities and directly identify Uzbek victims in detention facilities. NGO staff reach out to victims in their native languages (Uzbek or Russian) and provide



assurances that they will help them expeditiously return home without serious legal consequences. This has in turn placed more burden on the only two shelters in the country but has resulted in more victims obtaining assistance. The NGO staff has also worked hard to make inroads with Uzbek consular staff in the UAE and officials at the airport in Tashkent to help get victims home as efficiently as possible. This innovative approach to identify and reach out to victims in the destination country could be a useful model for anti-trafficking organizations in other parts of the world.

NORLAND